

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 13910 160759Z
ACTION HA-05

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R 160700Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
SECSTATE WASHDC 4566

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 13910

UDORN 0124 DATED P 150600Z MAY 78 SENT ACTION BANGKOK BEING
REPEATED TO YOU FOR YOUR INFO:

QTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L UDORN 124

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF TH CB
SUBJ: BURIRAM AND NAKHON PHANOM DETENTION CENTERS

1. CONREP VISITED BURIRAM DETENTION CENTER MAY 12 FOLLOWING
VISITS TO SURIN AND UBON REFUGEE CAMPS EARLIER SAME DAY AND
MAY 11. HE REPORTS THAT BURIRAM CENTER, WHICH IS OLD,
PARTIALLY REFURBISHED PROVINCIAL PRISON, CURRENTLY HOLDS
277 CAMBODIAN REFUGEES. HE NOTES THAT REFUGEES APPEAR TO BE
IN POOR PHYSICAL CONDITION AND IN GREAT NEED OF EMERGENCY
SUPPORT ITEMS.

2. CONREP DROPPED OFF TWO BOXES OF CLOTHING RECENTLY
DONATED BY EMBASSY BANGKOK FAMILIES FOR DISTRIBUTION TO
REFUGEES. HE REPORTS THAT MOST OF CLOTHES WERE FOR
INFANTS WHICH WAS USEFUL BUT THAT MAY ADULT REFUGEES DO
NOT HAVE ADEQUATE CLOTHING. HE STATES THAT MOST NEEDED ITEMS
BY REFUGEES ARE SHIRTS, PANTS, SANDALS, MOSQUITO NETS,
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SLEEPING MATS, SOAP, TOOTHBRUSHES AND TOOTHPASTE.

3. WE SUGGEST THAT EMBASSY REFUGEE OFFICE CONSIDER
PASSING ON THIS INFORMATION TO ICRC BANGKOK OFFICE (THEIR
NORTHEAST REP IS PETER BALTENSBERGER) WHICH HAS A MONTHLY
BUDGET FOR PURCHASE OF SUPPORT ITEMS TO ASSIST REFUGEES
IN MOI DETENTION CENTERS AND JAILS. REFUGEE OFFICE

MIGHT ALSO REQUEST ICRC TO ENCOURAGE LOCAL THAI RED CROSS ORGANIZATION IN BURIRAM OR PROVINCIAL MEDICAL OFFICER TO ARRANGE FOR MEDICAL TEAM TO VISIT DETENTION CENTER ON REGULAR BASIS TO TREAT REFUGEES.

4. CAMA SERVICES REP DAVID ANDRIANOFF TOURED NEW NAKHON PHANOM DETENTION CENTER MAY 10. HE REPORTS A TOTAL OF 285 REFUGEES IN CENTER OF WHICH 147 HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED FROM NONG KHAI AND 138 TRANSFERRED FROM UBON. CAMA SERVICES REP STATES THAT CONDITION IN CENTER, WHICH IS BUILT TO ACCOMMODATE 300-600 PEOPLE, APPEAR TO BE GOOD. REFUGEES SEEM TO ADEQUATELY FED, HOUSED AND CLOTHED.

5. COMMENT: MOI-FUNDED DETENTION CENTER IN BURIRAM AND NAKHON PHANOM ARE FINALLY OPERATIONAL, NEARLY SIX MONTHS AFTER THEIR SCHEDULED OPENING DATE LAST NOVEMBER (1977). UNDER ORIGINAL TERMS OF RTG'S EXCLUSIONARY POLICY REFUGEES PROCESSED INTO THESE TWO CENTERS WERE CLASSIFIED AS "NON-LEGITIMATE" REFUGEES SUBJECT TO REPATRIATION TO LAOS OR CAMBODIA, BY FORCE IF NECESSARY. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF RTG'S TACIT RELAXATION OF ITS EXCLUSIONARY POLICY DURING PAST SEVERAL MONTHS IT DOES NOT APPEAR AT PRESENT THAT THESE REFUGEES WILL BE SUBJECT TO FORCIBLE RETURN TO THEIR HOMELANDS.

6. AT SAME TIME IT IS NOT CLEAR TO US WHAT ARE RTG'S PLANS
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FOR REFUGEES IN THESE CENTERS. SOURCES IN NONG KHAI REFUGEE CAMP TELL US THAT MANY OF REFUGEES RECENTLY SENT FROM PROVINCE'S ISOC DETENTION CENTER TO NAKHON PHANOM WERE CHARGED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES WITH THIEVERY, JUVENILE DELINQUENCY AND POLITICAL SUBVERSION. THIS SUGGESTS TO US THAT, AT LEAST IN CASE OF NAKHON PHANOM, OFFICIALS MAY BE USING NEW DETENTION CENTER IN PART AS A PLACE TO DETAIN TROUBLEMAKERS OR UNDESIRABLE FROM AMONG REFUGEE POPULATION.

7. WE WOULD ALSO NOTE THAT AS POPULATION OF DETENTION CENTER INCREASES, LIVING CONDITIONS THEREIN COULD BE A PROBLEM. MOI, WHICH IS PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR SUPPORTING CENTERS, HAS NOT PROVEN ITSELF TO BE AN EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION FOR RESPONDING TO REFUGEE LIVING NEEDS. THERE ARE NO VOLAGS OPERATING IN CENTER TO TAKE UP SLACK. HOWEVER, AN INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION LIKE ICRC, WHICH HAS SPECIFIC CHARTER TO ASSIST ILLEGAL ENTRANTS, CAN BE OF SOME ASSISTANCE TO MOI WITH SUPPORT OF DETENTION CENTER.
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